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PHONETICS.

le mean mór ón wgónye

BY

REV. M. O'FLANAGAN,
SUMMERHILL COLLEGE, SLIGO.

DUBLIN:
BROWNE AND NOLAN, LIMITED, NASSAU STREET.
1904.

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IRISH PHONETICS

By REV. M. O'FLANAGAN

SUMMERHILL COLLEGE, SLIGO

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PREFACE.

THE object of the following few pages is to examine the sounds of Irish in the light of general phonetic principles. I do not claim to speak with any special authority on the subject; I merely wish to draw attention to a very interesting aspect of Irish, which, as far as I am aware, has hitherto been practically untouched. Anybody who has already mastered the sounds of Irish will derive advantage from this little book only in so far as he critically examines each statement in it, and perceives its truth from his own experience.

It is now generally admitted that the rational way to acquire the sounds of a new language is by systematic drill upon exercises drawn up in accordance with phonetic laws. Such exercises for Irish will be found on pages 17 and 18. The set may be rendered fairly complete by re-writing the given lists with the consonants aspirated. Teachers

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should write such lists on the blackboard, and get their classes to repeat them in unison.

The remarkable way in which the phenomena of broad and slender sounds, of aspiration and of eclipsis work out is the most interesting portion of the booklet. I hope it will surprise and delight my readers as much as it did me when I first realized it.

M. O'F.

January, 1904.

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IRISH PHONETICS.

I.—The Organs of Speech.

The lungs blow air through the windpipe into a cavity at the back of the mouth called the pharynx. Just before leaving the windpipe the air passes between the vocal chords, which may be relaxed and silent as they are in breathing, or may vibrate so as to produce *voice*. From the pharynx the air may pass over the tongue, between it and the soft palate, and out through the mouth; or, it may pass up behind the soft palate and out by the nostrils. It is while flowing from the pharynx through one or both of these passages that the *voice*, and the *voiceless currents* of air are moulded into the various vowel and consonant sounds. There is, however, one written sound that is articulated by the vocal chords themselves.

II.—The Aspirate.

If air from the lungs is blown silently over the relaxed vocal chords, and, while the current continues, the chords are suddenly drawn into position for vibration, the transition from a silent to a sounding breath of air gives the aspirate. Similarly,

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if the vocal chords are in vibration, and, while the air current continues, are suddenly relaxed, we have a final aspirate or *h* sound. As this is an important and fundamental point, it is as well to realise it fully. In pronouncing the word *awe* the first step is to put the vocal chords under proper tension for vibration. A column of air is then played on them, so that the moment it starts the chords begin to vibrate, and voice is produced. This voice is, as we shall see afterwards, moulded by the mouth into the vowel sound *awe*. In pronouncing the word *haw*, the stream of air is first set up, and flows for a moment over the relaxed vocal chords: then the chords are drawn into position, and the vowel sound follows.

III.—Vowels.

The vowel sounds are all pure *voice*. When voice is allowed to pass freely out through the mouth, the result is a vowel sound. The character of the vowel depends on the shape of the oral passage. Theoretically the number of vowel sounds is unlimited. There are, however, six that are well known and easily distinguishable.

Three of the Irish vowels are commonly known as broad. They are written a, o, u. When long they are pronounced respectively like the vowel sounds in the words law, no, and too. Put the

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forefinger in the mouth, letting it lie along the upper surface of the tongue, and pronounce in succession the three long vowels á, ó, and ú. It will be observed that in pronouncing á the *back* of the tongue is arched slightly upwards towards the soft palate; in pronouncing ó it is arched up more; and in pronouncing ú still more. These three vowels are therefore called *back* vowels, and are distinguished respectively as low, medium, and high.

The Irish slender vowels é and í are pronounced like the vowel sounds in pay and pea. Place the finger in the mouth as before and pronounce these two vowel sounds. In this case it will be seen that it is a portion of the tongue nearer the front, about an inch behind the tip, that is arched upwards. For é this portion of the tongue approaches closely, and for í still more closely, the highest portion of the roof of the mouth. These two vowels are called front vowels, and the portion of the tongue arched upwards in their production is called the FRONT. There is a third front vowel sound in Irish, but it has no separate character to represent it. The sound is that commonly given in Ireland to the vowel in half or pan. It is represented in Irish spelling by eá or ái. If you have got its true pronunciation you will observe that it is accompanied by a slight elevation of the *front* of the tongue. It is therefore called the *low* front vowel sound, é and í representing

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respectively the *medium* and *high* front vowel sounds.

The true English sound of the vowel in half can scarcely be classed as back or front: while pronouncing it the tongue appears to be kept in a state of practically complete relaxation. Even the Irish sound has its frontal character so little in evidence that it does not class itself with é and í in the rule caol le caol.

The only remaining simple vowel sound is that represented by the letters ao. This combination is pronounced in three different ways in the North, West, and South. In the North it gets the French *u* sound, which is heard so frequently from Ulster speakers of English. In the West the sound is something like *ee*, except that it is pronounced at the back of the mouth instead of the front. In the South the sound is the French *eu*, so often heard from genuine Munstermen in such words as there. The Munster sound is formed in much the same way as the Connacht one, except that the opening between the back of the tongue and the soft palate is wider in the South. The Ulster sound is narrow or *high* like the Connacht one, and is chiefly distinguished from it by the rounding of the lips. In each case the vowel is a true back vowel, but the back of the tongue, in addition to being elevated as it is for the ordinary back vowels, is also slightly pushed forward.

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The short sound of an English vowel scarcely ever corresponds to its long one. Thus the short sound of *e* in pen is really the short form of the sound of *a* in pane: the short form of *i* in fill is the shortened form of *ee* in feel. In Irish, however, each of the vowels has one long and one short sound; and the short sound is in each case the shortened form of the long sound.* The long sound of á is always like *au* in naught, while the short sound is like *o* in not. The long sound of ó is like *oa* in boat, and the short sound like *u* in but. In like manner ú is like the vowel sound of poor, and u like that of put. é is like the *a* of pane, and e like the *e* of pen; í like the *ee* of feel and ı like the *i* of fill.

IV.—Pure Consonants.

A. Labials.

To pronounce the English word *pay*, the closed lips are burst open by air from the lungs. The front of the air current is silent, that is to say it is unaccompanied by vibration of the vocal chords, but just as the lips are burst apart, the vocal chords are drawn into vibration, and the vowel é follows. In pronouncing the word *ape*, we begin with a pure vowel sound: then the vocal cords are relaxed,

* I do not wish to enter into the rather difficult distinction between what are called narrow and wide vowel sounds.

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changing the voice to breath; but just at that moment the lips are closed and again burst open by a slight puff of breath.

In pronouncing the word *bay* the lips are also burst open by air from the lungs. This time, however, the front of the air current sets the vocal chords vibrating, so that it is voice and not silent breath that first bursts through the lips. Similarly in the case of final *b*, as in the word *babe;* the lips close down upon the column of air, while the vocal chords are yet in vibration.

In pronouncing the word *may*, the lips are closed at first, just as for pay and bay. The current of air starting from the lungs sets the vocal chords in vibration, and finds a partial escape through the nostrils. It presses against the lips, however, for an adequate outlet; they are parted, and the vowel sound follows. The hum through the nose, that precedes the sound of *m*, is a sort of imperfect vowel sound, and may, like a vowel, be continued indefinitely.

It will be noticed that *m*, like *b*, is concerned with *voice* only. In other words, *m* is the natural result of trying to pronounce *b* with the nasal passages open. If, however, a current of *silent* air, which is allowed this partial escape by the nose, burst open the lips, and just at that moment changes into voice, we have a breath form of *m*. This sound bears the

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same relation to *p* that *m* does to *b*. It does not exist in English, but is heard in Irish words beginning with ṁ, when the ṁ is aspirated: *e.g.*, mo ṁiġ. Most speakers do not aspirate in such cases.

The four consonant sounds that we have considered are called labials, because they are produced by a burst of air through the *lips*. The burst may be *breath* or *voice*, and each may or may not have nasal escape. In the case of *breath*, there must, of course, be always that immediate transition into *voice*, which when heard alone gives the aspirate or *h* sound. But, not at the lips alone can the exit of air through the mouth be completely stopped. And for each place, where the air can be so stopped, we have four sounds precisely analogous to the four labials described above. It will be well to remember this while examining the five sets of consonants that are produced by five different stoppages between the tongue and the palate.

B. Linguals.

Of these five stoppages, one is made by the point or tip of the tongue against the hard palate; two by the upper surface of the fore half of the tongue against the hard palate, and two by the upper surface of the rere half against the soft palate. The first of these, the English *t*, *d*, and *n*, are organically

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independent of the rule caol le caol, and therefore we shall treat them first. The remaining four sets will introduce us to the precise nature and reason of that rule.

§ 1. In pronouncing the English letters *t*, *d*, *n*, the edge of the tongue all round is pressed against the gums of the upper jaw. The letters are pronounced by lowering the tip of the tongue, so that the first rush of air strikes against the teeth. The *t* and *d* sound seems to have no recognised standing in native Irish words, although Munster speakers seem to use them pretty freely, at least in loan words. The *n*, however, is the common pronunciation of a single *n* at the end or in the middle of a word. *N* is, of course, a voice consonant; its corresponding breath or flatus consonant does not exist in English. Irish speakers use it commonly in such expressions as a ṅuḋ. One ought to practice changing a *voice* consonant into its corresponding *breath* consonant. Pronounce in succession several times and very distinctly, the sounds *v*, *v*, *v*, *v*, and *ḟ*, *f*, *f*, *f*. *V* is a humming from the throat that passes with friction between the teeth and the lips, while *f* is a voiceless breath passing with friction through the same place. Substitute for the humming through the nose of *n* a blowing of voiceless breath, and the result will be the ṅ of a ṅuḋ.

Here it is best to introduce another pair of sounds

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which have no corresponding labials, the English *l* and its corresponding breath sound. These sounds require the same contact as *t*, *d*, n and ṅ except that the air is allowed to escape at the side of the tongue before the burst at the front is made. The breath form of *l* is heard in such expressions as a ċlú.

Caol le caol ⁊ leaṫan le leaṫan.

The next four sounds will introduce us to the physical foundation of the famous Irish rule caol le caol. I shall begin with the soft palate ones as they are heard in English as well as in Irish.

§ 2. Broad c, g, and ng.

In pronouncing the English words coo, go and gong, the consonantal contact is produced by pressing the back of the tongue up against the lower edge of the soft palate. This is the portion of the tongue that is humped up in three different stages to produce the back vowels a, o, and u:—Another step in the humping upwards makes it touch the soft palate, thus producing a complete interruption in the vocal passage. This interruption is broken through by silent breath to produce *c*, by vocalised air to produce *g*, and by vocalised air with nasal escape to produce *ng*. The corresponding nasal *breath* sound is not heard in either Irish or English, so that it may be passed over. The three sounds given are

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written in Irish by the letters c, g and ng, proceeded or followed by a broad vowel. The ng sound is not heard at the beginning of any English words, and therefore it is rather a difficulty with learners to acquire the pronunciation of it at the beginning of an Irish word. Practise such an expression as *ong-ong-ong* a great number of times, and try to connect the *ng* rather with the following than the preceding vowel sound; this will give Irish ng at the beginning of a word: as a ngá, their spear.

§ 3. c, g, ng SLENDER.

In English words cave, give, king, the *c*, *g*, and *ng* are produced by a contact between the *surface* of the soft palate and the rere half of the tongue. In this case it is a front vowel that comes next the consonant. The front vowel requires the tongue arched up under the whole palate, so that its rere half lies near and parallel to the soft palate and its fore half near and parallel to the hard palate. By bringing the rear half from this position up against the soft palate, the soft palate slender consonants are produced; and by bringing the front from this same position forward against the hard palate, we get the hard palate slender consonants. The soft palate slender sounds are represented by c, g, and

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ng proceeded or followed by a slender vowel. Corresponding l sounds both voiced and voiceless are often heard, and are written respectively ġl and ċl, followed by a slender vowel, *e.g.*, a ġleo, lam ċlí.

In English as in Irish the broad sound of *c*, *g*, and *ng* accompanies the broad vowel sounds, and the slender sound the slender vowel sounds. Compare the words caulk, coke, cook, cog, gog, gong in which all the vowels and consonants are broad, with the words gag, cake, kick, gang, keg, gig, in which they are all slender. Compare also coo (cú) with cue (ciú). English *spelling* not being systematic the rule caol le caol does not apply to it. Understood of pronunciation, however, it is a phonetic law and must exist in every language in which the sounds occur.

§ 4. t, d, n, l Slender.

We must now return to the hard palate sounds. These sounds are not heard in correct English, but are often heard in English words as spoken in Ireland. To the *t* of tune, the *d* of dew and the *n* of new we usually give the slender sounds of t, d and n. According to the true English standard we have in these words the ordinary sounds of *t*, *d*, and *n*, followed by a short but distinct *i* sound. This *i* sound is only brought in by a special effort of the

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voice, and this is the reason why it is so distinct. In the case of slender Irish ⲧ, ⲟ, and ⲛ, the short ⲓ sound follows as a matter of necessity, because the moment the ⲧ, ⲟ, or ⲛ is exploded the tongue must pass into the position required for the vowel ⲓ. This ⲓ sound is not dwelt upon, but is the shortest possible *glide* that must intervene between a slender hard palate consonant and a broad vowel.

If any of my readers are not acquainted with the common Irish pronunciation of tune, duty, and new, they may get very near the sounds as follows: *ch* of much, *dg* of bridge, and *nch* of pinch are very like the three sounds, but with a distinct *sh* or *zh* sound after each.

There is in Irish a corresponding ⲗ sound, which we give to *ll* in William; also a voiceless ⲗ written ⲣⲗ and a voiceless ⲛ written ⲣⲛ.

§ 5. ⲧ, ⲟ, ⲛ, ⲗ Broad.

The consonant sounds in the English words thaw and thee, as these words are usually pronounced in Ireland, are produced by contact between what is called the blade * of the tongue, and the inside of the upper front teeth. These are the broad sounds of ⲧ and ⲟ. By introducing the nasal hum, and the

* The blade is the portion inside the tip, between it and the "front."

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voice escape at the sides of the tongue, we get respectively the broad sounds of n and l.

These sounds are only heard in English, in such words as mo*n*th and fi*l*th, where they are immediately followed by the broad sound of t. They are sounds which very few learners master. They would find it useful to practise the four words tá, dá, ná, lá, keeping the top of the tongue in exactly the same position for each of the four.

The following lists will illustrate the five sets of linguals:—

I.—Tip of tongue and hard palate.

taw,	daw,	gnaw,	law.
tea,	Dee,	knee,	lea.

II.—Blade of tongue and hard palate (Broad).

tá	dá,	ná,	lá.
tae,	dae,	nae,	lae.

III.—Front of tongue and hard palate (Slender).

teó,	deó,	neó,	leo.
té,	dé,	né,	lé[an].

IV.—Rere half of tongue and surface of soft palate (Slender).

ceo,	geo[cac],	a ngeo[cac],	a ġleo.
cé,	gé,	an ngé,	a ġlé.

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V.—Back of tongue and margin of soft palate (Broad).

cá,	'ʒá	áɲ nʒá[ɪɲ].	—
cae,	ʒae,	a nʒae.	—

In each case I have given first a broad and then a slender vowel sound following the four consonant sounds. It will be observed that in group I. the consonant sound can be followed equally well by the broad and slender vowel sounds. In II. and V. the consonant can be readily followed by a broad vowel sound, but cannot be followed by a slender vowel sound without inserting a short broad vowel sound (glide). In III. and IV. the slender vowel sound follows naturally, but the broad vowel sound only by the insertion of a slender glide.

§ 6. S.

S broad is pronounced exactly like *s* in say, and ɾ slender like *sh*. They are, strictly speaking, not pure consonants, inasmuch as the air passage is not completely stopped. To pronounce ɾ broad, as in ɾál, the blade of the tongue is pushed forward against the teeth, as in the case of ɾ broad: a narrow space is, however, left between the tongue and upper teeth. Through this space a jet of breath is blown, striking against the edges of the teeth of

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the lower jaw, and producing the hissing sound of ꞃ. The vocal chords are then drawn into vibration, and at the same time the mouth is opened and the vowel sound follows. S, like ꞇ, is a breath or mute consonant. Its corresponding *voiced* sound *z* does not exist in Irish.

To pronounce *sh* or ꞃ slender the top of the tongue is drawn back, so as to leave a cavity between it and the front teeth of the lower jaw. At the same time the "front" of the tongue is put up close to the hard palate, and a jet of air is thus directed down into the cavity, producing the sound of *sh*. This sound is also a mute; its corresponding sonant, the French *j*, is not heard in Irish.

§ 7. R.

The sound of the consonant *r* is lost in modern English. It is now represented by a very short vowel sound. In Irish, however, and to a large extent in English, as spoken in Ireland, it is retained. The sound is produced by placing the tongue in pretty much the same position as for ꞃ, and allowing tip of it to be set in vibration by the outflowing current of air. The position for ꞃ broad will give ꞅ broad, and the position for ꞃ slender will give ꞅ slender. In the case of ꞅ broad the tip of the tongue is driven forward so as almost to touch the

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two front teeth, and the vibration is somewhat freer. In ꞃ slender the "front" is elevated, the tip is therefore drawn back and the vibration less free. These sounds, especially the slender one, are rather difficult to acquire. The best way to go about it is to practice them in immediate connection with the other hard palatals. Thus in the words shriek and marsh, if the *r* is pronounced distinctly and in close union with *sh*, keeping the tongue in the same position for both, the slender sound of ꞅ will result. For those who know the correct sound of slender ꞇ the pronunciation of ꞇꞃí ought to enable them to get the pronunciation of ꞃí. Imiꞃꞇ, ꝺꞃeoiꞇín, coiꞅꞃiꞅ and ꞇúiꞃne afford good practice in ꞃ slender, as do oꞃꞇ, áꞃꝺ, ꞇꞃom, ꝺꞃomꝺ in ꞃ broad.*

It will be observed that unlike ꞅ, ꞃ is a sonant or voice consonant. The corresponding breath sound is the one usually given to ṡꞃ and ṫꞃ, *e.g.* mo ṡꞃón, ꝺ ṡꞃiꝺn, ꞃo ṫꞃom, ꝺiṫꞃiꞅ.

V.—Modified or Aspirated Consonants.

A pure consonant, as we have seen, is caused by a sudden burst of breath or of voice through a complete stop in the vocal passage. When, instead of the stop being complete, a small aperture is left,

* It is interesting to note in this context that the rule cꝺoꞇ ꞇe ꝯꝺoꞇ applies to two consonants coming together.

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and the breath or voice forced through this aperture for a moment, we have an aspirated or modified consonant.

To realise this we shall take the syllable pá. It is produced by a burst of breath followed by the vowel sound. If a very slight opening be left between the lips, and an attempt made to pronounce pá, the result will be ꝑá or ṗá (faw). A similar experiment on the syllable bá will give ƀá, a sound which approximates to *vau* or *wau*, according to the size of the aperture and the force with which the air escapes through it. When a slender vowel precedes or follows, ƀ is like a *v* sound, when a broad vowel, like a *w* sound.

If we try to pronounce the m of mín without quite closing the lips, we get something like *veen*, but with a distinct nasal ring in the *v*. This is the pronunciation of ṁín. When the accompanying vowel sound is broad, the result is usually more like *w*.

If we try to pronounce ce without allowing the tongue to quite touch the hard palate, the result is ċe (*hye*). The corresponding sonant ȯ when aspirated gives the sound of simple *y*. Similarly, ceó and ȝé give sounds like *hyō* and *yae*, except that the *hy* and *y* are pronounced at the back of the mouth, between the tongue and soft palate.

The c of cú is an explosion of breath between the

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edge of the soft palate and the back of the tongue. If a slight opening is left here, and breath blown through it before the vowel is pronounced, the result is ċú. ϩ in ϩά is pronounced by an explosion of *voice* through the same position, and in ġά by blowing voice through a similar opening.

The effect of aspiration on ⲧ and ⲑ broad is exceptional. In the case of ⲑ̇ the resistance that might be expected between the blade of the tongue and the teeth, or hard palate, is completely removed, leaving nothing but a naked ⲏ sound. In ⲑ̇ this resistance is also removed, but is replaced by a resistance at the back of the tongue, giving ⲑ̇ broad the same sound as ġ broad. This cannot have been the original sound of ⲑ̇. Indeed, the old sound is not yet lost. I have often heard it in such phrases as Ⲑⲓⲁ ⲧ Ⲙⲙⲓⲣⲉ ⲑ̇ⲙⲓⲧ: although the ġ sound appears to be more common. This original ⲑ̇ sound is not at all unlike the genuine English sound of *th* in though and thou. It is, however, fuller and broader. It is a fine sound, and should be preserved.

Two other consonants, ⲣ and ⲫ, are aspirated. They are not pure consonants; hence the effect of aspiration is to widen an opening that already exists. It does this to such an extent as to remove the special resistance altogether. As both ⲣ and ⲫ are breath letters, the natural result of aspiration would be to leave a simple ⲏ sound. This is always so in

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the case of ṫ. In the case of ḟ, however, even this h sound is usually lost, and the letter is silent.

VI.—Assimilation of Aspirated Consonants by Vowels.

The broad vowels á, ó, and ú are produced by elevating the back of the tongue towards the soft palate by three different steps. A fourth step would make the tongue touch the soft palate, producing the contact required for the broad soft palate consonants. When these consonants are aspirated the tongue has to be again slightly lowered so as to leave an opening between it and the soft palate. Thus the position for ċ and ġ is practically the same as for the vowel u. Ċ being a breath consonant retains its separate sound, but ġ being voiced is assimilated by a preceding u, merely lengthening the u sound, *e.g.*, uġoaṁ. For a similar reason ġ merely lengthens the medium back vowel o,* *e.g.*, ṙoġ. With the low back vowel, however, it usually forms a compound vowel sound like our pronunciation of the pronoun I. The first portion of the compound is short a, and the second is the short form of Connacht ao. Both portions are therefore broad, *e.g.*, aġaiḋ.

While pronouncing the three back vowels, the

* As might be expected the usage is not so uniform in this case.

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blade of the tongue approaches the hard palate in three different stages. A fourth step would give the contact for the broad consonant ᴅ. Aspirated ᴅ requires the blade of the tongue in almost the same position as the vowel u. Hence u and o* assimilate a following ᴅ̇ and are lengthened by it, *e.g.*, cꞃuᴅ̇, oᴅ̇aꞃ. With a it forms a compound vowel pronounced like aʒ̇, *e.g.*, taᴅ̇ʒ.

While pronouncing the three back vowels *the lips also approach each other in three different stages.* The position of the lips, therefore, for b̈ and ṁ is almost the same as for u. Hence they are assimilated by and lengthen a preceding u and o,* *e.g.*, ub̈all ꞃoṁat. With a they form a compound vowel sound similar to the English *ow* in how. To realise how this comes about try to say ʒab without quite closing the lips on b. The result is ʒab̈.

For the three front vowel sounds, the front of the tongue is raised in three different stages. For the vowel sound ı the rere half of the tongue is in a position similar to that required for slender ʒ̇, and the fore half in a position similar to that required for slender ᴅ̇; ʒ̇ and ᴅ̇ are therefore assimulated by and lengthen the high front vowel ı (uı and oı). With the middle and low front vowel sounds aı and eı they form a compound vowel sound, which is like

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the genuine English sound of the pronoun I, *e.g.*, ꞇaıȯƀꞅe.

What appears to be the strange pronunciation of such words as conꞅnaȯ ıonꞅnaȯ, ıonꞅanꞇaċ is merely another case of the assimilation of an aspirated consonant sound by a preceding vowel. nꞅ, both in Irish and in English, represents a simple consonant sound, which ought to have a single letter to represent it. In the words given this sound is aspirated, and assimilated by the preceding vowel sounds. The aspiration is not however written, owing, no doubt, to the difficulty of deciding how to write it.

VII.—Combinations of Vowels.

When the long broad vowel sounds are both preceded and followed by broad consonant sounds they are, of course, written simply á, ó and ú. When, however, a long broad vowel is preceded or followed by a slender consonant sound, then a slender vowel sound must intervene. Thus we have explained the following combinations, eá, eó, ıú, áı, óı, úı, eáı, eóı, ıúı. In each case the broad vowel sound alone need be attended to. The slender vowel is but a necessary glide from or to the slender consonant.*

* The final glide may, however, be lengthened into a long ı sound by assimilation of ȯ or ꞅ, *e.g.*, ceóıꞅ.

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In like manner when a long slender vowel, é or í, is preceded or followed by a broad consonant, then a broad vowel glide must intervene. Thus we have the following combinations, aé, aí (oí, uí), aoí, ía, ío, uío.

It is well to remember that in aoí, íai and ía the accent is usually not written.

When a slender short vowel comes beside a broad short vowel the combination has in almost every case two quite distinct sounds. In the majority of cases the slender vowel is a mere glide, and all the stress is laid on the broad vowel, as in the words maiom, teaċ, deoċ, coill, cuio, tiuc; in some cases, however, the broad vowel is the glide, and on the slender one the stress is laid, as in duine, fior, while still a third class have a simple sound unlike either vowel, but somewhat of a mean between them, as air, leanb, coirce. These several pronunciations can only be learned from Irish speakers, until a pronouncing dictionary is forthcoming. The usage of native speakers is, moreover, very far from being uniform upon the pronunciation of these short digraphs. I have often heard speakers of the same locality give very different relative values to the u and i in the words Muirne and duit.

The only other combinations of vowels are ao, ua, uai, éi and ei. The sound of ao has been already referred to. In ua, both vowels are sounded sepa-

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rately with the principal stress on the u. The ı of uȧı is merely the glide that is necessary to get from uȧ on to a slender consonant. ḗı and eı have the simple long and short sound of e. The ı is superfluous inasmuch as it only represents a glide from a slender vowel to a slender consonant.

VIII.—Combinations of Consonants.

Some combinations of consonants give rise to new simple sounds. In tlú the t is a lateral burst of breath against the jaws. In its aspirated form ṫlu the t disappears as a separate sound, but the voiced l is converted into its corresponding breath sound, the fine sound of which the Welsh are so proud. A breath form of n is heard from some speakers in words beginning with rn or tn when the r or t is aspirated. In like manner it will be observed that vl, cl, gl, and sometimes tn, vn, cn, gn, give rise to new sounds. In the case of the last four the best speakers, however, pronounce the first consonant in the ordinary way, inserting a short vowel sound between it and the n.

When two hard palate consonants come together, the softer of the two is often the only one heard. Thus in vl, and ln the l only is heard, while in vn and sometimes in nv the n only is heard.

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IX.—Eclipsis.

The phenomenon known as eclipsis is governed by the following laws:—

1. The mute or breath consonants are eclipsed by their corresponding voice consonants:—c by g, t by d, p by b, and f by b.

Aspirated letters cannot be eclipsed inasmuch as no word in Irish, when standing apart, begins with an aspirated-letter. S broad or slender cannot be eclipsed, because its corresponding voice sounds do not exist in Irish.

2. The voice consonants are eclipsed by their corresponding nasal sounds:—g by ng, d by n, and b by m.

The nasal consonants themselves are not eclipsed. Neither is l nor r.

X.—Irish Spelling.

We have examined the distinction between broad and slender vowel sounds. The broad vowel sounds require the back of the tongue elevated, while the slender vowel sounds require the front of the tongue elevated. Similarly the broad consonants are those that require the back of the tongue elevated, and the slender consonants the front of the tongue. The consonants produced by the lips, and those by the tip of the

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tongue, are independent of the position of the back or front of the tongue. They cannot, therefore, be classed as either broad or slender. They should be independent of the rule caol le caol. This rule has been engrafted on them owing to the analogy of the other consonants. It would be well, therefore, to relieve Irish spelling of the strain, which the application of this rule to p, b, m, f, ṗ, ḃ, ṁ, ḟ, and single n and l puts upon it

The want of a single vowel to represent the low front vowel sound (ea in such words as lean) is the greatest drawback to our Irish system of spelling. If this want were supplied and a new simple consonant substituted for ng, it would be easy to make Irish spelling a very satisfactory means of representing articulate sound.

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